

Office of the
INSPECTOR GENERAL



R E P O R T O F I N V E S T I G A T I O N

File Number: 06-094

Agency: Georgia Department of Transportation

Basis for Investigation: Anonymous Complaint

Allegations: Abuse of State Vehicles by Employees

Date Opened: December 7, 2006

Investigated By: Deborah W. Copeland, Deputy Inspector General

Date of Report: January 22, 2007

Elizabeth P. Archer, Inspector General

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL



File Number: 06-094

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This preliminary inquiry was conducted based on the receipt of a complaint alleging that two Georgia Department of Transportation (DOT) employees were abusing their state vehicle privileges. The complainant alleged that Steve Henry, Division Director, and David Crim, State Maintenance Engineer, used their vehicles for personal and overnight assignment for commuting between their residences and work.

The Office of Inspector General worked with DOT staff in reviewing the specifics of this complaint and determined that both Henry and Crim are authorized vehicle assignments based on their individual job responsibilities. They are designated as “on-call staff” by DOT Commissioner Harold Linnenkohl because they are first responders who, when called to duty, report to a worksite regardless of its location.

Our preliminary inquiry revealed that the employees are, in fact, following established state and departmental policies and procedures concerning their vehicle assignments. The DOT Commissioner has delegated authority to these employees allowing them to make decisions on behalf of the agency pertaining to emergency repairs or purchasing. This authority allows Henry and Crim to take immediate actions to repair roadways or bridges that have been declared unsafe due to accidental, environmental or other causes, including the responsibility to make emergency purchases for needed services or materials furnished by outside vendors.

After a review of the facts, we conclude that the allegations are unfounded.



Report of Investigation

File No. 06-094

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Basis for Investigation	1
II.	Action Taken In Furtherance of Investigation	1
III.	Narrative	1
	A. Background	1
	B. Preliminary Inquiry	1
IV.	Conclusion	3
V.	Recommendations	3
VI.	Referrals	3

**Summary of Actions
Department of Transportation
File Number 06-094**

I. BASIS FOR INVESTIGATION

In December 2006, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) received an anonymous complaint alleging that two employees from the Georgia Department of Transportation (DOT) were abusing their state vehicle privileges. The complainant alleged that Steve Henry, Division Director, and David Crim, State Maintenance Engineer, used their vehicles for personal and overnight assignment to commute between their residences and work. The complainant further alleged that Henry has not been called out after hours in years and that Crim drives a state vehicle to his home in Tifton on the weekends. Henry and Crim are also alleged to have an improper relationship with the Board of Transportation.

II. ACTION TAKEN IN FURTHERANCE OF INVESTIGATION

During the course of this preliminary inquiry, OIG reviewed official personnel files and internal DOT records. We also reviewed Vehicle Assignment policies and procedures from the Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) and DOT, and retrieved relevant forms, logs, and reports.

III. NARRATIVE

A. Background

DOT plans, constructs, maintains and improves the state's road and bridges; provides planning and financial support for other modes of transportation such as mass transit and airports; provides airport and air safety planning; and provides air travel to state departments. DOT also provides administrative support to the State Tollway Authority and the Georgia Rail Passenger Authority.

The employees named in the complaint are assigned to work in the department's Operations Division. This division is responsible for ensuring a safe and efficient transportation system by controlling operational features, addressing maintenance needs, setting policies, and regulating the proper use of Georgia highway facilities.

B. Preliminary Inquiry

In January 2006, OIG met with Deputy Commissioner Buddy Gratton at DOT to review the specifics of this complaint and acquire documentation from the

agency's official files.

During the course of our preliminary inquiry, OIG reviewed established policies and procedures including OPB Policy No. 10, Revision 4, dated February 1, 2005, "Rules, Regulations and Procedures Governing the Assignment of Motor Vehicles", and DOT's Policy (7198-1) on Motor Vehicle Assignment. We retrieved copies of Motor Vehicle Assignment and Use Authorization Forms, Emergency Response Logs, Monthly Usage Reports, and Fuel Expenses for both employees.

OIG determined that Henry and Crim, both of whom have worked for DOT since 1979, are authorized for Overnight Vehicle assignments on a daily basis because of their individual job responsibilities. They are designated as "on-call staff" by DOT Commissioner Harold Linnenkohl because they are first responders who, when called to duty, report to a worksite regardless of its location. These employees are also authorized to drive their state vehicles to and from their residences per provisions set forth in OPB policy. As a matter of record, in addition to the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner, Henry and Crim are the only two employees in DOT authorized to make emergency repairs decisions.

Records discovered during our inquiry dispute the complainant's allegation that Henry "has not been called out after hours in years." To the contrary, Henry's on-call responses during the past year, 19 in total, exceed the number of call-outs required for vehicle assignment. Crim's on-call responses during the past year also meet OPB's policy requirements.

The complaint alleged that Crim's actions are fraudulent because he not only drives the state vehicle to his local Atlanta residence, but also commutes to his permanent home in Tifton on the weekends. However, information obtained during our inquiry justifies these actions on the part of Crim.

Although Crim's main residence is in Hayhira, Georgia, and is located near DOT's Tifton District Office, our investigation revealed that the bulk of his duties are in Atlanta. Even though Crim travels home to Hayhira on the weekends, he remains on-call.

As the State Maintenance Engineer, Crim's job responsibilities entail statewide operations including overseeing bridge maintenance, roadway maintenance and contracting, and truck weight permitting. Crim is required to manage these three areas from the Atlanta office. He is also responsible for overseeing striping operations encompassing approximately 200 employees, which operates in the Forest Park area of Atlanta.

According to Commissioner Linnenkohl, Crim cannot manage and oversee these functions from the Tifton District Office, although that is the area geographically closest to Crim's permanent residence. Crim therefore, resides in a motor home community in the Atlanta area during the week to avoid commuting on a daily basis to Lowndes County.

Commissioner Linnenkohl and Deputy Commissioner Gratton have reviewed all internal documents authorizing employees Henry and Crim's use of state assigned vehicles. As agency management officials, they authorized the actions of these two employees. Given that the complainant's allegation about the improper relationship with Board Members lacked specificity, OIG could not conduct further inquiry into this matter. Neither the Commissioner nor the Deputy Commissioner is aware of any fraud or abuse on the part of Henry or Crim, including improper relationships with DOT Board Members. Both Commissioner Linnenkohl and Deputy Commissioner Gratton welcomed this independent review by OIG ensuring no fraud or abuse exists as alleged by the complainant.

IV. CONCLUSION

Our preliminary inquiry revealed no indication of fraud or abuse of state vehicles on the part of Henry or Crim. These employees are following established state and departmental policies and procedures concerning their vehicle assignments. The DOT Commissioner has delegated authority to these employees allowing them to make decisions on behalf of their agency pertaining to emergency repairs or purchasing. This authority allows them to take immediate actions to repair roadways or bridges that have been declared unsafe due to accidental, environmental or other causes, including the responsibility to make emergency purchases for needed services or materials furnished by outside vendors.

It should be noted that Commissioner Linnenkohl recently conducted a comprehensive review of DOT's vehicle fleet. This review was in keeping with Governor Perdue and OPB's efforts to tighten management controls and motor vehicle policies to ensure efficient use of state resources. As a result of the review, a number of DOT employees' state vehicle assignments were eliminated.

After a review of the facts, we find no substance to the allegations that Henry and Crim abused their state vehicle assignment privileges.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

None.

VI. REFERRALS

None